

Penn and Liberty Avenues (Commercial Buildings)
(Harper Building)
723-725 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh
Allegheny County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5152-E

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PENN AND LIBERTY AVENUES (COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS)
(Harper Building)

HABS No. PA - 5152E

Location: 723 - 725 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Quadrangle Name: Pittsburgh West/Pittsburgh East
Quadrangle Scale: 1:24,000

UTM References:

- a. Zone: 17 Easting: 584700 Northing: 4477110
- b. Zone: 17 Easting: 584690 Northing: 4477170
- c. Zone: 17 Easting: 584830 Northing: 4477220
- d. Zone: 17 Easting: 584860 Northing: 4477140

Present Owner: Public Auditorium Authority of Pittsburgh

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Significance:

The Harper Building is significant as a tribute to John Arunah Harper, a prominent financier, organizer, and philanthropist in late nineteenth century Pittsburgh. Harper's long career with the Bank of Pittsburgh led to his election as president of that institution, which he served from 1866 to his death in 1891; he guided other phases of industrial and business life as well. Mrs. Lydia Harper, John's wife, commissioned the erection of the nine-story mercantile warehouse that bears her husband's name shortly after his death. She selected Charles Bickel, an architect of regional interest, to execute the work.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1892 - 1893

Pittsburgh Bureau of Building Inspection, Yearly Docket of Building Permits, Volume 9, 22 August 1892.

Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide, Volume 7, No. 38, 21 September 1897, announcement that Charles Bickel had prepared plans for a warehouse to be erected for Mrs. Harper.

2. Architect: Charles Bickel

Charles Bickel's biography has been recorded amply in the History of Pittsburgh and Environs, 1922 (pp. 255-56), and History and Commerce of Pittsburgh and Environs, 1893-94 (p. 171). Bickel, born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1852, was educated in the public schools, then spent six years in Europe studying architecture at the Karlsruhe Polytechnic Institute and the University of Nuremberg. He began his practice in Pittsburgh in 1885 and for a short time, worked in partnership with John P. Brennan. Bickel was on his own in 1892 when he designed the warehouse for Mrs. Harper. According to his biographers (History of Pittsburgh and Environs), Bickel "did probably more work than any other architect in the state of Pennsylvania, his plans averaging yearly close to \$3,000,000 in building construction or about \$100,000,000 for the period of his activity in this field." Among the more noteworthy buildings of his career were: the German National Bank, Arbuthnot Building, the Kaufman Stores, the Duquesne National Bank, the great structure of the Pittsburgh Terminal and Warehouse Company, and numerous ten- and twelve-story office and commercial buildings in Pittsburgh and various cities in Pennsylvania. Towards the end of his career (d. 1921) Bickel served as city architect, designing numerous public buildings including the Public Safety Building and several police stations. Bickel was a member of the American Institute of Architects.

3. Original and subsequent owners:

References to the chain of title to the land upon which the structure stands are in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Allegheny County Courthouse Annex, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

- 1856 Deed, November 28, 1856, recorded in Volume 126, pages 327 - 28.
John Irwin, Trustee, to John Harper.
- 1891 Will, April 5, 1891, recorded in Will Book Volume 39, page 1.
John Harper to Lydia E. Harper.
- 1904 Will, January 28, 1904, recorded in Will Book Volume 76, page 500.
Lydia E. Harper to John A. Harper, Orlando M. Harper and Charles S. Harper; share and share alike.
- 1906 Deed, December 1, 1906, recorded in Volume 1496, page 487.
Orlando M. Harper and Kathleen T., his wife, to the Commonwealth Trust Co. of Pittsburgh, one third interest.
- 1911 Will, April 5, 1911.
Charles S. Harper to Lydia H. Crozer, one third interest.
- 1912 Deed, December 30, 1912, recorded in Volume 1757, pages 468 - 69.
John A. Harper, Trustee for John Harper, to John A. Harper and Lydia H. Crozer, wife of George K. Crozer, Jr.
- 1941 Deed, February 8, 1941, recorded in Volume 2679, page 740.
Sheriff Sale against John A. Harper and Lydia H. Crozer, to City of Pittsburgh, County of Allegheny, School District of Pittsburgh.
- 1950 Deed, July 11, 1950, recorded in Volume 3135, page 271.
City of Pittsburgh, County of Allegheny, School District of Pittsburgh to Manuel Weinman and Frank Weinman.

- 1951 Deed, March 1, 1951, recorded Volume 3134, pages 287 - 88.
Frank Weinman and Rose, his wife, and Manuel Weinman to Andrew L. Gamble.
- 1960 Deed, April 30, 1960, recorded in Volume 3863, pages 509 - 12.
Pittsburgh National Bank and Joyce McTighe, Executors, Estate of Andrew L. Gamble to Robert N. Lando.
- 1975 Deed, April 29, 1975, recorded in Volume 5401, pages 344 - 45.
Robert N. Lando to 725 Liberty Avenue Partnership.
- 1983 Deed, September 12, 1983, recorded in Volume 6729, psge 34.
725 Liberty Avenue Partnership to Beynon & Company Inc.
- 1984 Deed, June 14, 1984, recorded in Volume 6889, pages 540 - 69.
Beynon & Company Inc. to Public Auditorium Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Wm. Kerr's Sons

Wm. Kerr's Sons, contractors and builders, was founded in 1861 by William Kerr. Upon his death in 1886, his sons T.J. and William A. Kerr took control of the firm. These two partners, native Pittsburghers, managed the firm when the Harper Building was constructed. Among their other noteworthy projects were the Millville and Nineteenth Ward public schools; First Presbyterian Church, Carnegie, PA; McCann Building; and several banks, residences, and offices.

5. Original plans and construction:

The Harper Building was built as a nine-story warehouse on a stone foundation, with girders carried on brick walls and piers and limestone and brownstone details on its Liberty Avenue facade. The structure occupies all of its 30 by 110 foot site and was constructed at an estimated cost of \$50,000. In plan, the Harper Building was organized into clear span open loft spaces with an elevator and stair in the front half of the warehouse, along the west wall.

6. Alterations and additions:

The Harper Building is missing its pressed metal cornice that once matched the roof line of its neighbor, the Arbuthnot Building. Windows are typically original throughout the building, although the first floor shopfront has undergone the most radical alterations to both windows and piers. The interior displays partitions installed to accommodate the various commercial tenants throughout the years.

For further information on the Penn-Liberty area, see

LOYAL ORDER OF MOOSE BUILDING (Moose Hall)	HABS No. PA-5149
WALLACE AND MCALLISTER BUILDINGS	HABS No. PA-5150
KINGSBACHER'S	HABS No. PA-5151
PENN AND LIBERTY AVENUES (COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS)	HABS No. PA-5152
PENN AND LIBERTY AVENUES (COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS) (McCormick Building)	HABS No. PA-5152-A
PENN AND LIBERTY AVENUES (COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS) (King Building)	HABS No. PA-5152-B
PENN AND LIBERTY AVENUES (COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS) (Whitten Building)	HABS No. PA-5152-C
PENN AND LIBERTY AVENUES (COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS) (Arbuthnot Building)	HABS No. PA-5152-D
PENN AND LIBERTY AVNEUES (COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS) (Lipson Building)	HABS No. PA-5152-F

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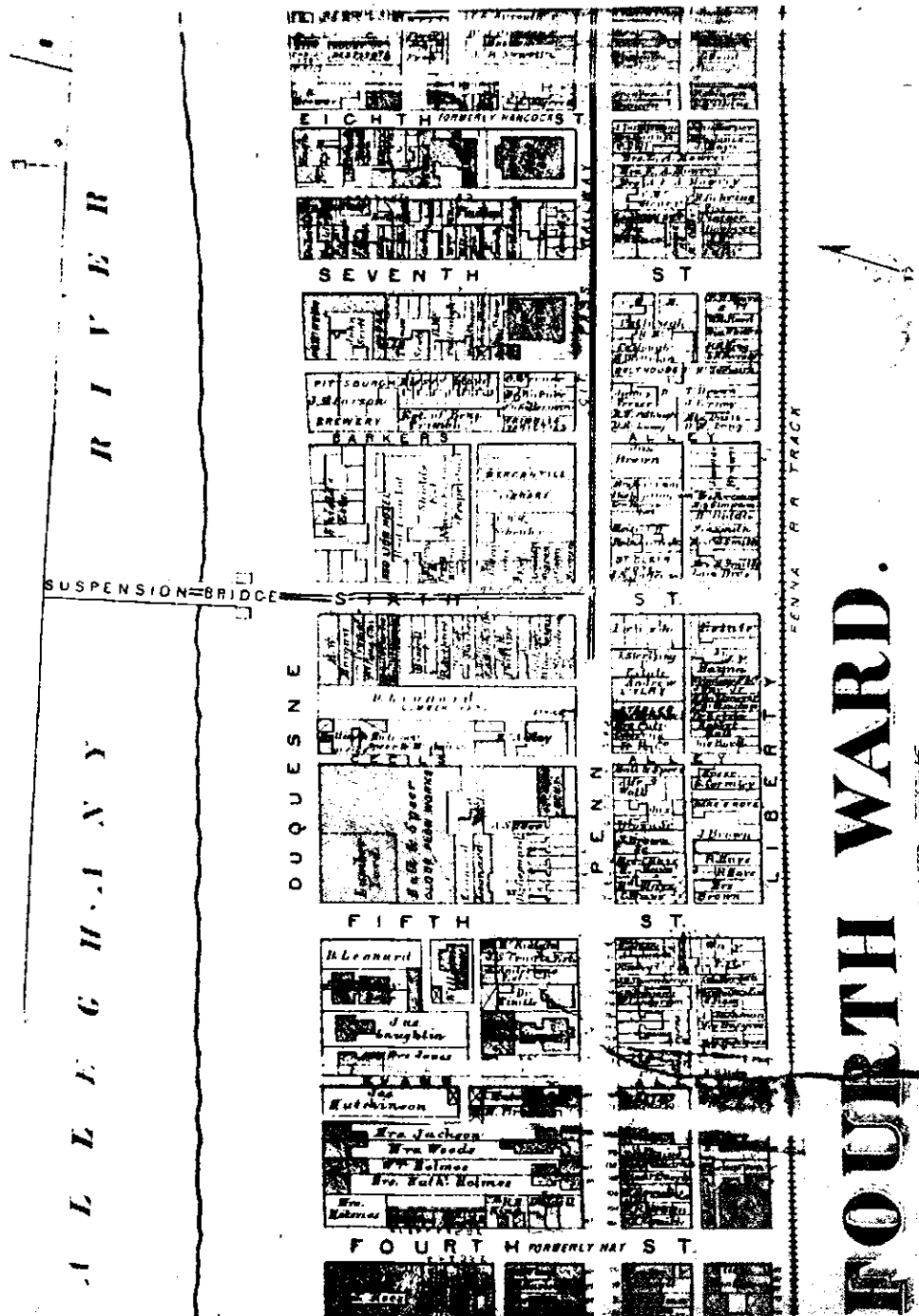


Fig. 1. Penn/Liberty area in 1872, from: G.M. Hopkins, Atlas of the Cities of Pittsburgh, Allegheny and Adjoining Boroughs, Philadelphia, 1872, plates 22,23.

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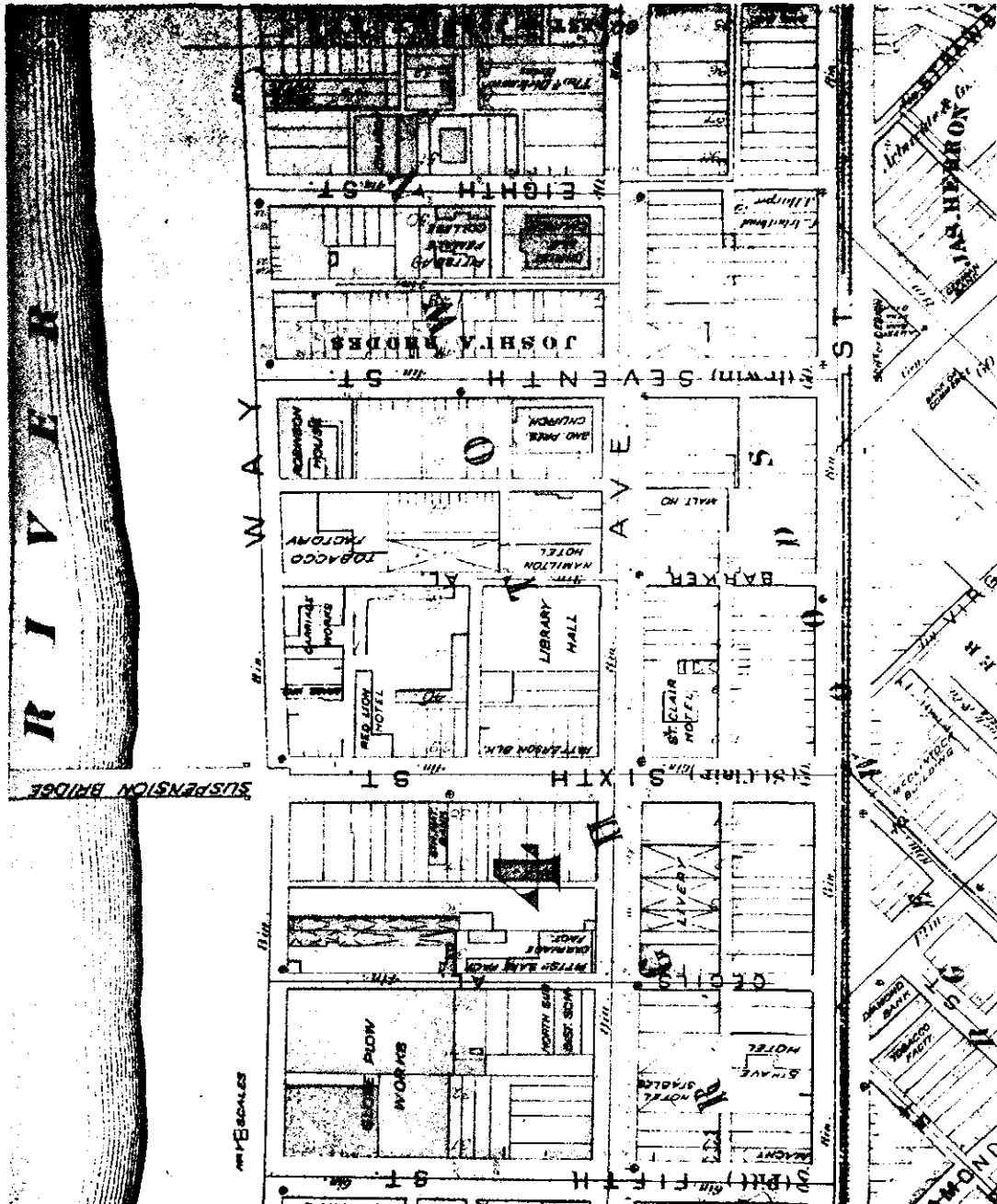
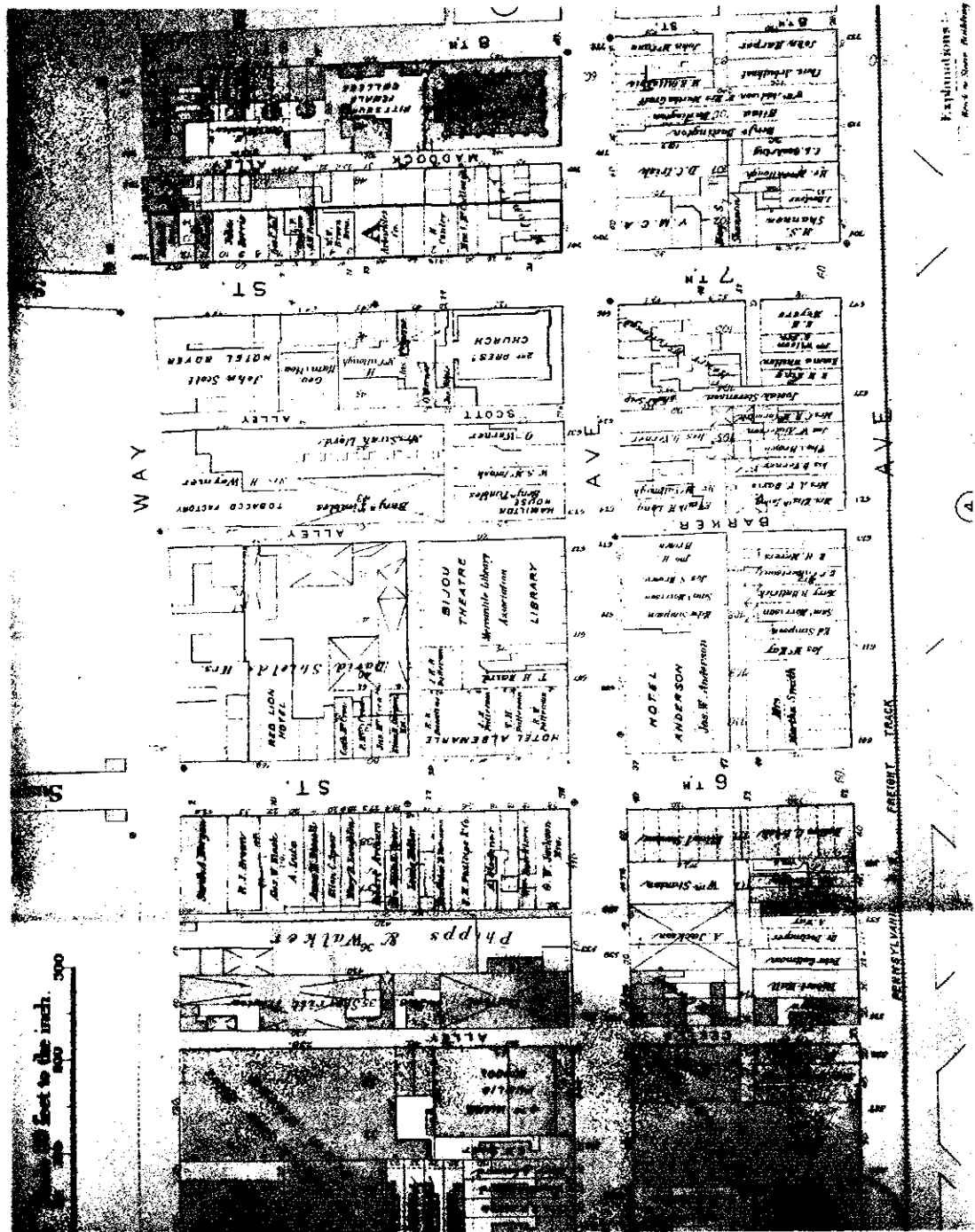


Fig. 2. Penn/Liberty area in 1882, from: G.M. Hopkins, Atlas of the Cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny, Philadelphia, 1882, plate 1.

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Fig. 4. Penn/Liberty area in 1910, from: G.M. Hopkins, Map of Greater Pittsburgh, PA, Philadelphia, 1910, plate 1.

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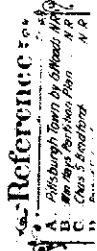


Fig. 5. Penn/Liberty area in 1923, from: G.M. Hopkins, Real Estate Plat Book of the City of Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, 1923, Vol. 1, plate 4.

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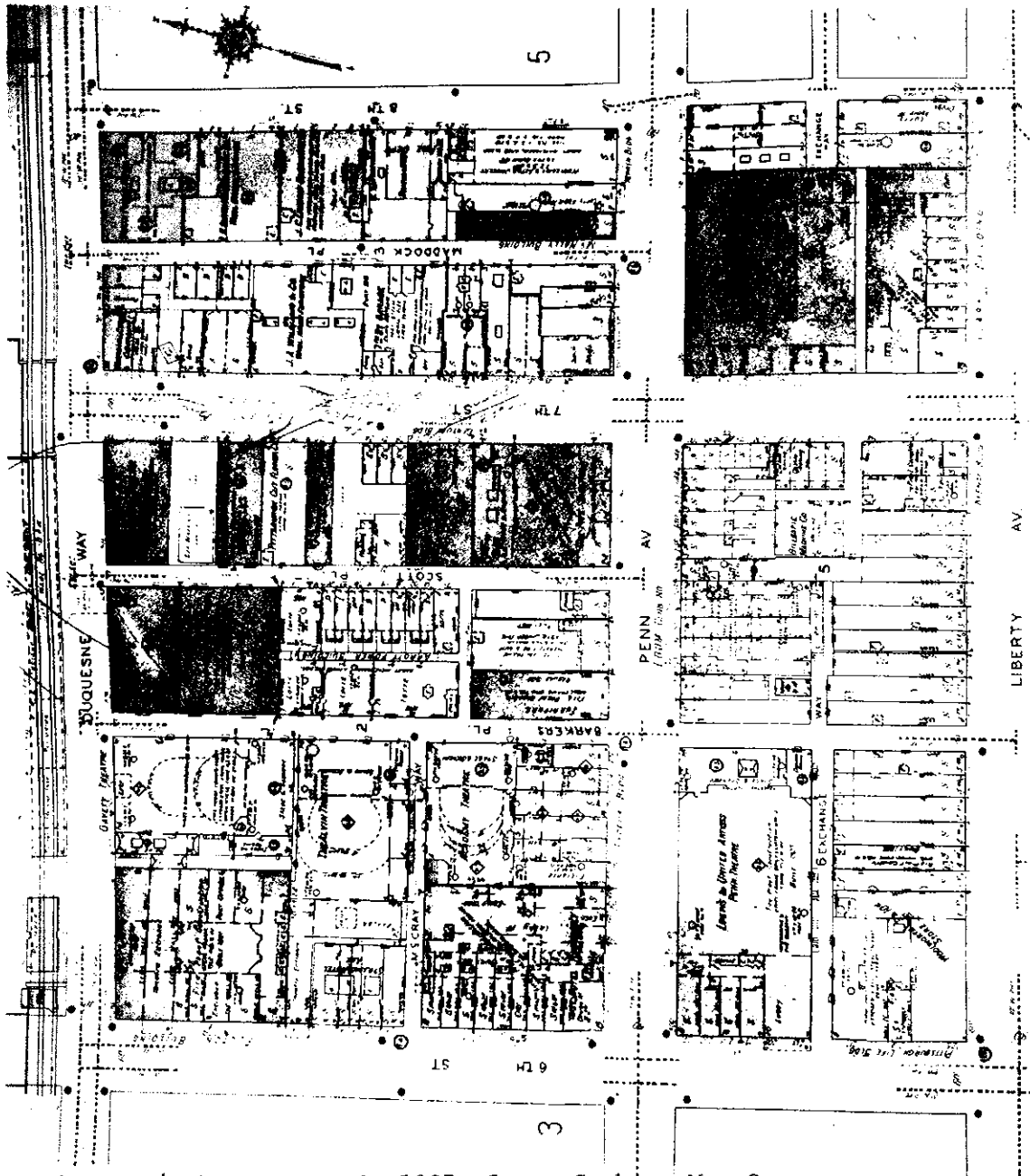


Fig.6. Penn/Liberty area in 1927, from: Sanborn Map Company,
 Insurance Maps of Pittsburgh, New York, 1927, Vol. 1, Plate 4.

B. Historical Context:

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, produce commission houses fronted by shed porches and delivery wagons, dominated the streetscape of Penn-Liberty, between Sixth and Eleventh streets. The freight lines of the Pennsylvania Railroad ran along Liberty Avenue from 1851 through the 1880s, making the area a logical location for Old World-style street markets. A passenger railway operated along Penn Avenue as early as 1859, but comfortable and convenient passenger transportation into the district was not fully realized until the early 1890s when the Liberty Avenue freight line was replaced by street car lines. In part, this development set the stage for the area's commercial, civic and cultural renaissance of the next two decades. A second important factor was the construction of new mercantile warehouses such as the Harper Building and the commitment to the region of wholesale and retail dry goods merchants, such as Joseph Horne, The Rosenbaum Company, and Arbuthnot-Stevenson. They had operated their stores in the neighborhood throughout the 1870s and '80s, then built more commodious and luxurious quarters in the 1890s and early twentieth century. With the apparent success of the downtown shopping center, hotels, theaters and clubs soon burgeoned, creating a distinct urban role for the Penn-Liberty area. However, in the 1950s and '60s redevelopment efforts and an increased focus towards areas outside the downtown contributed to the erosion of this commercial and entertainment core.

The Harper Building, opened for trade in 1893, not only promoted the image of the new Penn-Liberty downtown, but also, honored the late John Harper, President of the following organizations: the Bank of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Clearing House, the Pittsburgh and Allegheny Suspension Bridge Company, and West Penn Hospital. Remarkably, he was also director of the Monongahela Navigation Company, a "corporator" of Allegheny Cemetery, a trustee of the Western University of Pennsylvania, and a commissioner of the Sinking Fund of Allegheny County. As diverse as Harper's interests were, so were the tenants who occupied the building that bears his name. It began as a dry goods store for Taylor, Son and Co.; housed a barber, Dow Drug Co., Albert T. Rowley Co., artificial limbs, Pittsburgh Photo Engraving Co., in 1930 and was vacant by 1940, suggesting it was then that the major alterations to the first and second stories occurred. Other later tenants included a piano display room and the Gramble Inc., offices (the owner) in 1960, Peter Muller-Munk Assoc., offices, industrial design, drafting, display, and model making in 1961, and the First Home Savings Bank from 1976 to 1984.

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Fig. 7. Arbuthnot and Harper Buildings, 719 and 723 Liberty Avenue,
from: Art Work of Pittsburgh, W.H.Parish Publishing Co.: Pittsburgh,
1893.



Fig. 8. Harper and Arbuthnot Buildings (723 and 719 Liberty Avenue) looking North, photo: George E. Thomas, Clio Goup, Inc. 1985.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character:

Like the adjacent Arbutnot building, the Harper building shows the impact of the designs of Henry Hobson Richardson on the work of a local Pittsburgh architect, Charles Bickel. In this, Bickel was not alone. A survey of America's architects at the end of the nineteenth century placed several of Richardson's works, including the Allegheny County Courthouse at the head of a list of the most influential American buildings. Bickel adapted the Richardsonian motifs of simplification of architectural form and coloristic sobriety to the facade, but not the side and rear of the loft building which he erected at the corner of Eighth Street and Liberty Avenue. It is of note that its simultaneous construction with the Arbutnot Building at 719 - 721, from designs of the same architect, makes this one of the few adjoining buildings with similar floor heights and compositions. Both show a two story base, surmounted by four stories, in turn capped by a cornice. Here, for whatever reason, Bickel reversed the one/two sequence of stories of 719, and instead continued a sequential diminution of two stories separated by another cornice and crowned by a single story, below what was once a massive, overhanging cornice (now removed). In further contrast, where 719 was once a light, monochromatic stone, 725 was delicately polychromed, with light brownstone belt courses, lintels, base, and cornices set against light brick. The exterior has been painted, possibly at the same time that portions of cornices were removed, presumably when they began to decay and fall off. If the exterior has suffered damage -- no doubt due to failures of materials -- the general scheme of large scale elements, becoming smaller, and rounder as they go up, remain in evidence.

By contrast, the side and rear were of the utmost severity. The first bay continued the scheme of the front, showing the cornice and materials of the Liberty Avenue facade for the first 10 or 12 feet. At that point, the building returned to the customary materials of old Pittsburgh's commercial architecture -- red brick, laid up in common bond, with pairs of segmented headed windows in each bay, and three segmented headed windows at each story across the rear. Such a differentiation suggests that realistic Pittsburghers were quite as unwilling to expend money needlessly on ornament as their equally hard headed Chicago cousins.

2. Condition of fabric:

Though the principal themes of the design of the Harper Building can still be discerned, major changes have occurred that make it difficult to understand its original design without clues provided by earlier views. These, including a construction photograph published in 1893, and a view taken shortly after completion and published in 1899 show the extent of the losses. They begin with a dramatically altered base which shows evidence of at least three different states. The initial scheme provided for three piers capped by Richardsonian capitals, asymmetrically placed, to frame a narrow bay containing the entrance and a wide bay containing the shop windows. At a later date, that facade was replaced by limestone piers, with more conventional Corinthian capitals. In turn, that was altered in the past generation when the original fenestration was replaced by a modern metal industrial window, while portions of the pilasters were sheathed in brick, leaving only the bulbous granite base to recall the original materials. At the top, a generally Colonial Revival double cornice with wreathes and swags in the friezes, below a massive overhang has been removed, and apparently replaced by a brick parapet. In between, at the second and sixth stories, overhanging moldings have been removed, presumably for reasons of safety -- or taste -- or both. Finally, the building has been painted concealing the original architectural polychromy. The Harper building has been so significantly altered as to have little remaining integrity.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions:

The Harper building is essentially the twin of its neighbor, being 30 feet in width, 110 feet in depth, and according to the Sanborn's Survey, 125 feet in height. In area, these correspond to the oversized lots shown in the 1882 atlas, extending from Liberty Avenue to Exchange Place. The building is now some six or eight feet less in height with the loss of its cornice, but it retains its full nine stories.

2. Foundations:

The Harper building was erected on a foundation of massive blocks of rock-faced ashlar that rise from the excavated basement. The stone blocks are two feet by three feet on their

face, and of great hulk. At the front, the building cellar extends out under the sidewalk, in a vault carried on steel beams to bearing surfaces at the street edge.

3. Walls:

The side walls and rear walls are of common brick, laid in running bond with regular header courses. According to the Sanborn's Atlas, these diminish from 20 inches at the third floor, to 16 inches at the fifth floor, and then to 12 inches for the next four stories. The walls are punctuated at regular intervals of approximately 16 feet by engaged piers, suggesting load bearing masonry. The side wall, facing onto Eighth Street is penetrated in each bay by pairs of segmental headed windows, each arched by three concentric rows of brick. At the rear, three similar segmental headed windows per floor light the back of the building.

The front wall is the most difficult to assess because of problems of access, and, the painting of the surface. It is assumed that the hulging granite column bases are original, and that they supported brownstone piers capped by capitals, carved in situ (see construction photograph A showing large, uncarved blocks at location of capital). These have been removed, and replaced by what appears to be limestone piers. Brick from a later alteration covers the middle portions of the piers, and surrounds the modern metal framed windows. Above a destroyed dentil band, the building was sheathed in light brick, with brownstone lintels, and cubic capitals stretching across the facade from side to side, at the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth stories. At each story, the facade was subdivided into thirds by piers with rounded corners.

On the seventh and eighth stories the tripartite subdivisions continue, but with slender paired columns, accented by rusticated bands that mark the spandrel at the eighth floor, and joined at the top by round arches outlined by raised moldings. A cornice at the top of the eighth story carries a one story arcade framing the ninth floor windows. The original cornice has been removed and replaced with a brick parapet.

4. Structural system, framing:

The framing system is a hybrid technology that marks the shift from masonry to steel frame. Steel beams are carried on piers projecting from the brick walls. It is possible that the piers

contain steel columns -- as do nearby buildings of similar size and date. If so, the building would be described as a steel frame, with wind bracing, and lateral support provided by party walls whose configuration, growing wider at the lower stories, reflects conventional load bearing construction. Wood joists 12 inches on center span the 17 foot bay of the steel beams. The front wall is carried on a steel beam at the second story, but is probably self bearing from that point on.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:

The basement extends under the sidewalk at the front of the building, with the excavated vault spanned by steel beams.

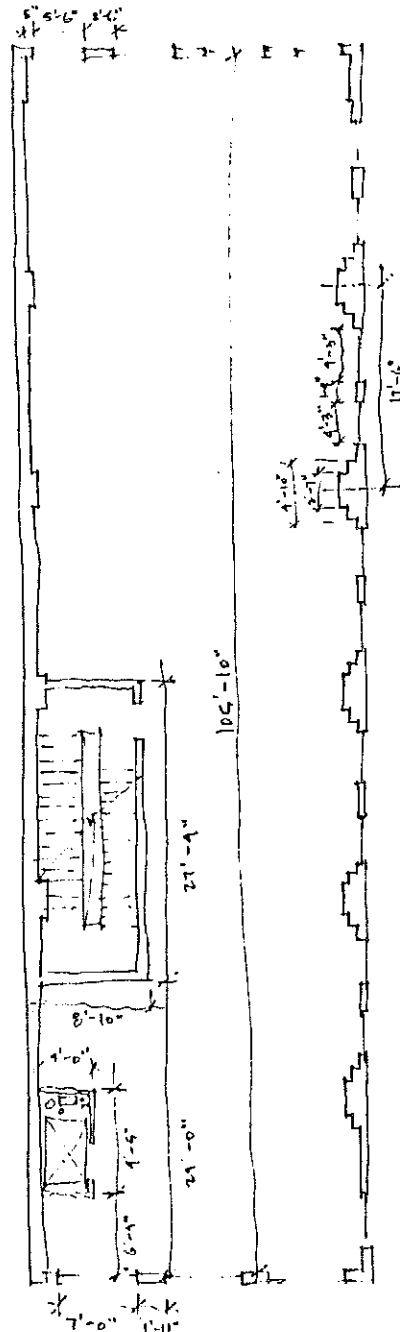
6. Openings:

At the first story, the original doors and shop windows have been removed in a series of renovations. The original system called for a door in the narrow left bay, with a shop window on the wider right bay. A spandrel above marked the second story, which was subdivided like the shop window below into two larger lights, with transom lights overhead. The middle level fenestration is subdivided into a broad center light, flanked by narrow side lights, below a transom that extends the full width of the masonry opening. There were casements on floors three to six. Where the masonry opening changes in the seventh, eighth and ninth floors, the window change over to narrow double hung sash with a short transom at the top. Those transoms are rectangular at the seventh floor and round headed at the eighth and ninth floors, reflecting the shape of the masonry opening. On the sides, paired window openings are segmental headed, with one over one sash in some openings, and two over two sash on the upper levels, (presumed to be original). Those same two over two sash appear on the rear elevation, with transoms on the taller second and third floor windows. The first floor rear openings are oversized, rectangular windows, with multiple lights. All original doors have been removed and replaced.

7. Roof:

The roof is of built-up, flat construction, with a slope for drainage from front to rear, which is clearly evident from the interior roof finishes.

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Fig. 9. Sketch Plan of First Floor of 723-5 Liberty Avenue, by John Bertola and Philip Snyder, of Kingsland, Bauer, Havekotte, Pittsburgh, PA.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

The Harper building is essentially a clear span loft extending from the Liberty Street front to the Exchange Alley rear, repeated on each of the nine stories and basement, with variations of plan depending on the needs of the tenants. On the left is an elevator, providing access to the upper stories, and beyond it is an enclosed fire stair that provides access to the nine stories of the building, and to the basement. According to the Sanborn's Atlas of 1927, it also had a rear elevator, presumably for freight, with access from Exchange Alley.

a. Describe by floors: First Floor

The first floor underwent a number of uses, including a dry goods retail store, a drug store, and most recently, a savings bank. Entrance through the modern glass doors on the left, provided access to the elevator lobby, and on the right, through glass doors into the bank which was a single large room. Its side windows have been walled in presumably for security. Halfway to the rear, on the left, a door opens into the modern stair tower, which is also connected to the rear door.

b. Upper Levels

Upper levels are essentially the same, with the exception that the fire tower exists independently because there is no rear corridor.

2. Stairways:

The stairwells are of later construction presumably reflecting required changes due to the fire code. Metal dogleg stairs rise to landings at intermediate levels. Concrete floors complete the fireproof interior. The front elevator has been converted to automatic operation, but remains in the same position as it had on the 1927 Sanborns. The cab is approximately four by six feet, constructed by the Houghton Company.

3. Flooring:

Flooring has been altered and overlaid, but the original yellow pine can still be seen on the upper levels. Otherwise, it is typically covered with linoleum.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

Walls are typically of wallboard on studs on the lower levels, particularly the bank and office spaces. The upper levels remain rough brick, with the segmented arches of brick spanning the opening.

5. Openings:

Doors and millwork have been replaced consistently throughout the building, leaving no original trim. Window openings show some variation, with marble sills on lower levels, and wood sills on upper levels. Windows are typically wood, double hung, on the rear and side, and on the top three stories of the front. On floors three through six, windows are wood casement with fixed transoms. The first floor windows have been replaced by modern metal frames.

6. Mechanical equipment:

The building is heated by radiators along the perimeter wall. Electricity was in the building from an early date. Plumbing was arranged in vertical runs between the elevator and the stair. Air conditioning units for each floor were later hung in the stair wells.

D. Site:

The Harper Building occupies all of its 30 by 110 foot site, with the principal facade facing Liberty Avenue, and the side opening onto the narrow, almost alley-like Eighth Street. The rear opens onto Exchange Place, another alley.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

Art Work of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh: W.H. Parish Publishing Co., 1893.

100 Views of Pittsburgh. H. Hammond Hook and Co., 1899.

B. Interviews:

Carolyn Boyce, Preservationist for Pittsburgh City Planning Department. Interview with George E. Thomas. Discussion of planning issues and proposed historic district.
18 December 1984.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form, Office of Historic Preservation, PA Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, PA.

Pittsburgh Bureau of Building Inspection, Building Permit Files, Public Safety Building, Pittsburgh, PA.

Pittsburgh Bureau of Building Inspection. Record Book of Alterations and Repairs, 1897-1914. Archives of Industrial Society, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh Bureau of Building Inspection. Record Book of New Additions, 1896-1916. Archives of Industrial Society, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh Bureau of Building Inspection. Yearly Docket of Building Permits, 1877-1916. Archives of Industrial Society, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh.

Recorder of Deeds, Allegheny Courthouse Annex, Pittsburgh, PA.

2. Secondary and published sources:

The Book of Prominent Pennsylvanians. Pittsburgh: Leader Publishing Co., 1913.

History and Commerce of Pittsburgh and Environs. New York: A.F. Parsons Publishing Company, 1893-94.

History of Pittsburgh and Environs. New York and Chicago: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1922.

Hopkins, G.M. Atlas of the Cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny.
Philadelphia, 1882. plate 1.

Hopkins, G.M. Atlas of the Cities of Pittsburgh, Allegheny, and
the Adjoining Boroughs. Philadelphia, 1872. pp. 22-23.

Hopkins, G.M. Atlas of the City of Pittsburgh. Philadelphia, 1889.
Vol.1, plate 5.

Hopkins, G.M. Map of Greater Pittsburgh PA. Philadelphia, 1910.
plate 1.

Hopkins Co., G.M. Real Estate Plat Book of the City of Pittsburgh.
Philadelphia, 1923. Vol. 1, plate 4.

Notable Men of Pittsburgh and Vicinity. Compiled by Percy F. Smith.
Pittsburgh: Press of Pittsburgh Publishing Co., 1901.

Palmer's Pictorial Pittsburgh and Prominent Pittsburghers.
Pittsburgh: R.M. Palmer, 1905.

Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide.

Pittsburgh of To-day. Compiled by the Consolidated Illustrating
Co., Pittsburgh, 1896.

R.L. Polk's Pittsburgh and Allegheny Directory.

R.L. Polk and R.L. Dudley's Pittsburgh, Allegheny and Allegheny
County Business Directory.

Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Pittsburgh. New York, 1927.
Vol. 1, plate 4.

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

University of Pittsburgh, Photo Archives

Prepared by: George E. Thomas, Ph.D., and Carol A. Benenson, M.S.
Clio Group, Inc.
15 February 1985

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Allegheny International project is a continuation of the downtown redevelopment of Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle. Spurred by the success of the Heinz Hall complex, and motivated by the availability of the Stanley Theater, the Allegheny Conference commissioned Llewelyn-Davis/Hanna-Olin to prepare the Penn/Liberty Urban Design Study which was completed in late 1979. The consultants found the region to be underutilized, and proposed three foci -- a performing arts center, a convention center, and the riverfront. Though buildings were often of high architectural character, changes in shopfronts had degraded the street level. Moreover, it was clear that as the effects of removing heavy industry from the river edge of the downtown continued to occur, the support zones that had developed to serve them in Penn/Liberty would become increasingly derelict. On the other hand, just as transportation had reshaped the region in the 1850s, it could be anticipated that the new subway would have a similar impact in the 1980s. The 600 and 700 blocks were found to have buildings of modest architectural interest -- with the exception of the Moose Hall, Kingsbacher's, and 631 - 633 Liberty, and recommendations were made that argued for the removal of many of those buildings to emphasize the area as a cultural center. It was assumed that in the end, while the Heinz Hall, Stanley Theater, and perhaps the Moose would stay, that the other buildings would be replaced by a larger office block fronting on Liberty Avenue.

Three years after the Llewelyn-Davis/Hanna-Olin study, newspaper stories reported the acquisition of property in the 600 block of Liberty and Penn avenues, by the operators of Heinz Hall, and in November of 1983 the Post Gazette reported that the Penn/Liberty project had been unveiled (19 November 1983). With Allegheny International as the prime mover two office towers would be erected, and the Stanley Theater would be restored. Land acquisition proceeded from 1980 until 1984, with the new owner being the Penn Liberty Holding Company or its subsidiaries.

In 1983 it became clear that the new project probably would cause the demolition of the Moose Hall while some concerns were expressed about the demolition of the adjacent shop buildings as well (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, "Triangle Landmark May Affect Tower Plan" 30 November 1983). The Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation dropped its opposition to the Moose Hall demolition in December of 1983 and on February 10, 1984, Louise Ferguson, Executive Director of the Foundation, announced their reasons. "Allegheny International would not go ahead with the Moose Building (in place on Penn Avenue)." The Post Gazette had already argued editorially "No Place for Moose" (5 December 1983), "What is clear is that the city stands to gain greatly from the construction of the new headquarters for Allegheny International, which will be a center for cultural as well as corporate activity. The Moose Hall should not be allowed to block that farsighted endeavor."

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The final solution was a memorandum of agreement between the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, and the Pittsburgh Trust for Cultural Resources (Penn Liberty Holding Company), the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, and the Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission to record the streetscape elevation of 631 - 641 and 719 - 725 Liberty Avenue, the Moose Hall, and 636 Penn Avenue, and to provide individual elevations of 631 - 633, 637 Liberty and the elevation and plans of the Moose Hall. Sponsored by the Heinz Endowment, the drawings were produced under the direction of John Hnedak, Office of Cultural Programs, Mid-Atlantic Region, National Park Service, by Kingsland, Bauer, Havekotte, architects of Pittsburgh, PA, in the summer of 1984. Supervising architect was Roger L. Kingsland, and the buildings were measured and drafted by Philip J. Snyder and John A. Bertola. At that time, the buildings were also surveyed, and sketch plans and data on them were gathered. In the autumn of 1984, George E. Thomas, Ph.D. and Carol A. Benenson, M.S., of the Clio Group, Historic Consultants, surveyed the standing buildings, developed the research and historic background and prepared the written documentation. During this later phase of the project, Rebecca Trumball of the Office of Cultural Programs, National Park Service, assumed direction of the Penn-Liberty report.